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ABSTRACT

The extensive television coverage of the Opening Ceremonies of the 1984 Summer Olympic Games was a vital lead-in for a television network as it sought to generate audience interest over the course of the games. This coverage models an unfolding international news event in its presentation style and is analyzed from that perspective in a content analysis of American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) television coverage of these ceremonies. Particular interest in these games stemmed from the fact that they took place on American soil and that ABC coverage was the subject of a good deal of criticism. A coding instrument, devised to analyze the videotape recording of the ceremonies, divided content into two domains, one political and the other athletic. Content categories selected for coding were: economic aspects of participating nations, relations to the United States, internal politics of the nation, and strife and/or warfare in the political domain; and general sports team and specific athletes in the athletic domain). The topic of fashion provided an additional neutral category. Findings indicated that although there was more commentary related to athletics than political commentary in ABC-TV coverage, the latter was still very apparent and rooted in stereotypical or ethnocentric contexts. (One note is included, and 20 references are appended.) (MS)

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NEWS OF OLYMPIC PROPORTION: ABC-TV AND THE 1984 SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES OPENING CEREMONIES

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a content analysis of ABC-TV coverage of the Opening Ceremonies of the 1984 Summer Olympic Games. The popularly received coverage of the Opening Ceremonies is a vital lead-in for a television network as it seeks to generate audience interest over the course of the Games. This coverage models an unfolding international new event in its presentation style and is analyzed from that perspective in this study. Particular interest in the 1984 Summer Olympics stemmed from the fact that they took place on American soil and ABC coverage was the subject of a good deal of criticism.

The Opening Ceremonies highlight a vast array of people from many nations gathered within the same locale. On television this diversity seems likely to invite news-like commentary not confined to the sporting aspects of the Olympic Games. This study found that although commentary related to athletics did outnumber political commentary in ABC-TV coverage, the later was still very apparent and often rooted in stereotypical or ethnocentric contexts. The politically charged atmosphere of the Olympics is possibly fueled by these messages which run counter to the goals of the Olympic movement, competition within an atmosphere of understanding and harmony.

Introduction

There are presently two places where a diverse community from all over the world gathers regularly, the United Nations and the Olympic Games (Wallechinsky, 1984). Given the limited television exposure the United Nations generally receives, the Olympics likely represent the most pervasive global gathering available to television viewers in the United States. This study examines the news-like structure and content of an important aspect of the Olympic Games coverage, the Opening Ceremonies.

Particular interest in the 1984 Summer Olympics Opening Ceremonies coverage stemmed from the fact ABC's domestic coverage could be viewed not only by the American public but by the Olympic community of athletes, officials, and dignitaries as they convened in Los Angeles. This is a situation perhaps analogous to party guests overhearing what the host purportedly thinks of them via some third party conversation. On the whole, having the Olympics on American soil heightened the degree of scrutiny given to all coverage via American television (Gross, 1984).

The Opening Ceremonies as a Television Product

For nearly four decades network television has delivered the Olympic Games to American households and in the process created a "living room celebration" for eager viewers gathered around their television sets (Rothenbuhler, 1988). In television industry parlance, the Olympics may be thought of as a miniseries extended well beyond the usual number of program hours. The hoopla and advanced promotion are certainly characteristic of the network miniseries. Although miniseries cost a great deal of money for the networks they bring prestige and draw many viewers to prime time who would not normally be watching television (Head and Sterling, 1987). Attesting to the Olympic Game's programming currency, the networks assign these precious prime time hours to their coverage.

We might consider the Opening Ceremonies to be a vital lead-in program or a functional bookend to the Games coverage as a whole. In the case of ABC, whose technological and financial commitment to the Summer Olympics of 1984 exceeded anything witnessed in prior Olympiads (ABC Pens, 1979), the Opening Ceremonies were crucial in creating audience interest and setting the momentum for two weeks of athletic competition. This task was made even more formidable by the Soviet led boycott which left ABC holding a potentially diluted television product.

Typically the Opening Ceremonies draw high ratings and in

many cases outdraw the actual sports contests of the Olympics on American television. John MacAloon aptly addressed this unique ratings potency:

> "One can scarcely imagine that a significant complement of viewers additional to sports fans tunes in specifically for the pre-game ceremonies of the World Series, the Super Bowl halftime, or the trophy awarding after the NCAA basketball championships.Yet this is precisely the case with respect to the Olympic Opening and Closing Ceremonies."(MacAloon,1987).

While some research has examined various aspects of televised coverage of the Olympics, precious little has been accomplished toward analyzing coverage of the Opening Ceremonies themselves. For example, McCollum and McCollum (1981) failed to include it in their content analysis of ABC-TV coverage of the 1976 Summer Olympics. The Opening Ceremonies were excluded from analysis and dismissed as a "shake down day for the ABC-TV team." The dismissal of such a popular and important (in terms of creation of programming inertia) event as merely a shake down exercise ignores both the effort and stakes involved. Indeed, ABC--as part of its intense production effort-- devoted twenty-six cameras to the Opening Ceremonies at the Coliseum in Los Angeles (Being There: The Games on TV, 1984).

It can safely be asserted that the Opening Ceremonies are an event staged chiefly with the interests of television in mind. In the case of the Opening Ceremonies of the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, 88,000 people were in attendance at the Coliseum while an estimated 2.5 billion people were said to be watching on television worldwide. The question then emerges, how did ABC

television convey this kaleidoscope of international relations, entertainment, and athletics? This question is also fueled by the hindsight knowledge that ABC was widely criticized for alleged ethnocentric treatment in its overall Olympic Games coverage.

The Opening Ceremonies as News and Information

The Opening of the Olympic Games, perhaps more than anything, resembles the functional equivalent of an unfolding international news story and its coverage reflects this. For this event, with all its pageantry and ritual, is very much devoid of the athletic competition which is the dominant attribute of a sports program. This broadcast does not come "dressed" as news, but by the same token, much of what is packaged as television news may also escape precise definition as news. Indeed, it does seem certain that concepts of news have expanded rather than contracted through time and now subsume a vast array of informational content. The presentation of such content as a source of information (regardless of labels attached) is therefore more to the point here. Emphasis will then focus on those elements which seem (for lack of a better phrase) "newslike." As Leo Bogart noted, the domains of news, entertainment, and information on television are seldom exclusive of one another (Bogart, 1980). The Opening Ceremonies present a hybrid television product, a mixture of sport and television spectacular, essentially placed within the context of this international news event.

Huntington Williams--in his discussion of the 1987 Pan American Games coverage by CBS--proposed that a deliberate tension could be created through the linkage of sports and news stories (Williams, 1987). Sports delegations represented "symbolic proxies" for specific military and political interests, in effect news being carried out on the playing field. The now famous Brent Musburger remark concerning drug problems stemming from Columbia--as the Columbian delegation marched in the Indianapolis Pan Am Games Opening Ceremonies -- highlights this news and sports mix. The precise definition of appropriate commentator protocol in this amalgam of on-field activities and real world politics is increasingly blurred.

While the presence of television has enlarged the concept of the Olympics, it has also focused particular attention on their inherent nationalistic aspects (Espy, 1981). Some have noted that in recent coverages of the Olympics, the media seem to have adopted political agendas that tend to dominate their treatment of the Games (Edwards, 1984). Athletic competition, the honored guest of the Games, can often be upstaged by the political baggage which seems to accompany it.

Televised coverage of the Opening Ceremonies provides a unique information source in its glimpse of this international gathering. Research has found that people readily draw inferences about nations based upon messages in the mass media and do so even when the messages can easily lead to inaccurate generalizations (Perry, 1984). This supports the general notion that people can and

sometimes do generalize based upon fragmented or biased samples of information when dealing in world affairs. Media images can play an important role in shaping people's orientations toward other nations and in framing their thinking about the international scene. It has been suggested that international news exposure plays a significant role in the general liking of a nation and the perceptions of a nation as successful (McNelly and Izcaray, 1986).

While never dismissing news as an informational source, Perry and McNelly (1988) found little support for the notion that increased amounts of news from several orientations contributed to more uniform attitudes toward three better known developing nations, Mexico, India, and Venezuela. However, we might expect the presentation of media images to be especially acute when dealing with countries a person has little familiarity with or has limited access to information about its people. Most importantly, even the truly "invisible" nations, those with relatively low news profiles, are brought to the forefront by televised coverage during the Opening Ceremonies. This makes this coverage a unique opportunity for both the presented nation and the television viewer. It might be expected that many American's experience with places such as Upper Volta, Seychelles, and a list of other countries, is dependent on some form of mediated experience, if any prior experience at all does exist.

A recognized function of the mass media is to extend our knowledge of the environment beyond the people, place, objects, and events that we can directly experience (Tan, 1982). If one

accepts the view that people tend to be cognitive misers not willing to expend a great deal of energy in accessing and/or processing information (Taylor and Fiske, 1978), then even limited or misleading information surrounding other countries takes on a greater potency. As Perry and McNelly (1988) noted, attitudes surrounding other nations are likely to be formed in a nexus of personal background experience and informational sources, among these is news.

Method

This study presents a content analysis of the ABC-TV coverage of the Opening Ceremonies of the XXIII Olympiad. As with other efforts using this research approach, its goal is largely descriptive in nature and seeks a systematic analysis of a segment of mass communication content (Berelson, 1971). Two broad content categories are the primary focus of the present research. The first area of study is commentary in the political vein, material more closely akin to news coverage. The second content area is commentary in the athletic vein or that consistent with a sports oriented program. Several basic research questions guide the present effort:

1. How much of the commentary consists of politically based references?
2. How much of the commentary consists of sports based references?

3. What types of political and sports commentary are contained in this commentary?

While the Opening Ceremonies are comprised of a number component parts--pageantry, ceremonial tradition, and those related specifically to athletes--a preliminary analysis revealed the Parade of Nations to yield the most fruitful and interesting subunit for analysis. This program portion was selected for several reasons. First, it is during the Parade of Nations that television coverage concentrates attention upon individual nation states separate from the aggregate. Second, and related to the first consideration, this individualized attention affords commentators ample opportunity to provide information unique to that individual nation.

A video tape recording of the Opening Ceremonies of the 1984 Summer Olympics was used for the present study. A coding scheme was devised which divided content into the two content domains, one political and the other athletic. After several trial sessions in which the coding instrument was refined, the following content categories were selected for coding:

Political--Four categories were representative of content in the political domain, material more closely akin to news coverage.

1. **Economic Aspects of the Nation**--any reference indicating either the economic status, economic system, or economic foundation of a given nation.

2. **Relations to the United States**--any reference to the current or historical relationship with the United States.
3. **Internal Politics of the Nation**--any reference that indicates the current or past political structure or political climate of a nation.
4. **Strife and or Warfare**--any reference to involvement in conflicts or wars, past or present.

Athletic--Two categories are specific to the sports domain, content taken to be sports program oriented.

5. **General Sports Team** --any reference to aspects of athletics or the sporting world, can be the accomplishments of prior Olympic athletes, team strengths, general participation in the Olympic Games, etc.
6. **Specific Athletes**--any reference citing a specific athlete.

Neutral--An additional category was included as a proxy measure of some neutral commentary, that without political or athletic overtone. This content category consisted of references to fashion or the apparel worn by the athletes, usually a colorful aspect of the Parade of Nations.

7. **Fashion** --any reference to what the athletes or officials of a delegation are wearing.

Coding was completed by two trained graduate students working independently. After several practice sessions the calculated

agreement coefficients were .89 for economic aspects, .93 for relations to the U.S., .85 for internal politics, .92 for strife or warfare, .86 for general sports team, .91 for specific athletes and .93 for fashion.[1]

Qualitative information appropriate to the discussion of results will be reported in more depth within the discussion section. This discussion will provide the reader with more descriptive details of the ABC coverage for a better understanding of the results.

Findings

The findings, in terms of the references encountered in content analysis, were as follows:

	% of total References*	% of Nations Referenced**
National Team Related	31%	48%
Specific Athlete	24	37
Relations to U.S.	11	17
Economic	11	17
Internal Politics	9	14
Fashion	7	11
Strife or Warfare	7	11
	* n=176	** n=114

When the four political categories (Relations to U.S., Economic, Internal Politics, and Strife or Warfare) were collapsed they accounted for 37 percent of all total references. When the two sports related categories (National Team Related and Specific Athletes) were collapsed, they yielded 55 percent of all total references. Hence, the actual number of references specific to

sports was found to be more frequent than political references when considered as a group. Of commentary in the political domain, relations to the U.S. and economic references were the most frequent, together comprising one fifth of all coded content.

It might have been expected that references to individual athletes (i.e. Edwin Moses) would outnumber more general references to national teams because ABC would highlight or showcase potential stars to generate audience interest. This was not the case as references to individual athletes (24%) were found to be less frequent than those of national teams (31%). ABC's much touted "up close and personal approach" did not extend to its coverage of the Opening Ceremonies. Perhaps this can be attributed to commentators attempting to include at least some sports information without furnishing the depth needed to single out individual performers. Also, the large number of team sports in the Olympics may tend to homogenize those performers and as such tend to promote more generalized television references, i.e. Spain's "outstanding basketball team."

Discussion

Prior to the discussion of the results from the coded data some additional findings will be briefly presented as necessary background. Some mention is needed of the commentators selected by ABC for the coverage. Jim McKay, ABC veteran of past Olympiads, and Peter Jennings of ABC's Nightly News provided commentary for

ABC's broadcast of the Olympic Opening Ceremonies in Los Angeles. These two had been teamed up in Olympics dating back to Montreal in 1976 and have continued as a tandem as recently as the Winter Olympics of 1988 in Calgary. Jennings is generally noted as an expert among news anchors in the field of world affairs and politics abroad. His presence reiterates the fact that the Opening Ceremonies are very much a mixture of news placed within the context of the sports world.

The Boycott

A brief mention of ABC's handling of the boycott is appropriate given its impact on the 1984 Games. Remarkably, the first hint of the Soviet led boycott came at a point well into the broadcast, about fifteen minutes into ABC's coverage. While a marching band was booming out "Yankee Doodle Dandy," McKay simply mentioned that the Soviets were not "taking the (television) feed." Throughout coverage of the Opening Ceremonies ABC seemed averse to any detailed mention of the boycott and its likely effects. The absence of East Germany was noted only in conjunction with the entrance of the West German delegation. Later McKay went so far as to offer, "Many people would have to be reminded the Soviets aren't here." ABC was not quick to provide such a reminder. There would be no dwelling on the fact that these Games might represent a diluted product for the network.

The 26 "Missing" Nations

Certain aspects of the entrance of the athletes and officials are subject to rules or are spelled out by tradition. Television coverage of this portion of the Opening Ceremonies is certainly not bound by any convention. For example, Greece is the first nation to enter the stadium and athletes enter in formation behind the flag of their nation, television is not obligated to show them nor comment on their entrance. This may seem to be an odd assertion, but for the athletes and officials of 26 countries it was most relevant as ABC cut away to commercials as they entered the stadium. Mali and Malta were replaced by ads for Beatrice and later Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, and Tonga were replaced by commercials for Atari and Pizza Hut. Jordan and Kenya were lost in the wake of "The Love Boat" and an ad for McDonalds. Rwanda, San Marino, Guinea, Haiti, Sierra Leone, and Upper Volta all suffered similar fates as they too were replaced by commercials. In one instance four countries were lost to a local station break and an ad for ABC's Nightly News, Peter Jennings himself! The seven country block from Rwanda to the Solomon Islands provided ABC with the longest opportunity to sneak away from the Coliseum and to these advertisements.

It is important to note that all 26 countries "bumped" to sell products were invariably smaller, developing, or Third World countries. Not a single Western or European nation would be lost in the network shuffle. Larson (1979)--in examining international

affairs as covered by the major networks-- found coverage afforded Third World nations lagged behind that of developed countries, a finding in agreement with this situation.

Of the 140 nations participating in the Olympics in Los Angeles, just 114 were shown entering the stadium that afternoon. One, Zaire, was ignored totally by television cameras and commentators despite the fact that the stadium announcer could be heard introducing them as they marched onto the field. Zaire, though not replaced by a commercial, had the disadvantage of entering right before the host United States delegation and was never acknowledged by ABC. An international collection larger than that of the United Nations took its place on the field of the Coliseum on July 28th, 1984; ABC television's portrayal of them as they arrived provides an interesting story.

ATHLETIC COMMENTARY

National Teams

General sports references to national teams were the most frequent of the content categories, comprising approximately 31 percent of all references. Almost half of the 114 nations were referred to in this context. These were at times quite broad references such as Bhutan's first participation in the Olympics, Ireland and Northern Ireland having sent a combined team, Finland being termed "a nation of fine athletes." Mexico was expected "to

be strong in walking events," Pakistan in field hockey, Nicaragua in baseball, and Spain had an "outstanding basketball team."

Mozambique, Cayman Islands, and several others were singled out for never having won "any medals." But Jennings would be quick to add "...but they're here," as if to be reasserting the Olympic creed of participation being of greater importance than victory. However, it seems clear that ABC favored mentions of success as medal counts from past Olympic performances were often mentioned in connection with the incoming nation state. When Greece arrived, the first entrant, McKay pointed out that Greece had not won a track and field medal since winning the marathon gold medal in 1896.

Antiqua is cited for "never having won a gold medal" while the viewer is left to wonder what other medal(s) they may have won. McKay also states of the Bahamas "It might surprise you, they have won medals." Victory seemed to be valued commodity in this television coverage, perhaps a circumstance at odds with an event holding participation not achievement to be most important.

Specific Athletes

The second most frequently found references, almost one fourth of the total, were mentions of specific athletes. At least one athlete from 37 percent of the countries was singled out, conversely this left just over 60 percent of the televised nations without any mention of their athletes. However, even this result

should be tempered by the fact that verbal mentions or graphics of the athlete name bearing his/her nation's flag were coded as a specific reference. While athletes carrying their flag are generally recognized as the elites of the nation, many such references were limited to these flag carrying responsibilities or honors. Hence, the number of athletes cited for their athletic abilities, was even less than the 24 percent reported here.

McKay handled most of the mentions of specific athletes and often referred to athletes of past Olympiads as well. A B C - T V coverage tended to point out the unusual achiever for mentions of specific athletes. For example, Angelo Parisi, an Italian born member of the French team won a bronze medal for England in judo in 1972 (Munich), married a French woman and won a gold for France in 1980. Neroli Fairhall, an archer from New Zealand, the first paraplegic to compete in the Olympics was cited. Rob DeCastella, the favorite in the marathon from Australia, was shown with a film clip insert of him competing in the Rotterdam marathon. Edwin Moses, the American hurdler, received a similar portrayal with "action footage" included.

Most mentions of non-flag bearing athletes were of those from Western or European nations. On several occasions even when an athlete was mentioned as a favorite, some connection with the United States would follow. For example, Per Johanson, the swimmer from Sweden was acknowledged for his skill in the 100 meter freestyle, but beating Mike Heath of the U.S., "that'll be tough." Brazil's Richardo Prado had a chance for a medal in

swimming and "trains in Houston." Even in citing Yugoslavian Drazen Dalipagic as "one of the best basketball players in the game," McKay also included that he would be matched up against either Michael Jordan or Sam Perkins of the United States.

A earlier measure of foreshadowing occurred in a close up of an Algerian athlete as he circled the track with his nation's delegation; ABC cameras zoomed in tight only to reveal a tiny American flag he was waving to the crowd. The ABC coverage of the Games in the coming weeks prompted I.O.C. President Samaranch to draft a letter criticizing ABC for its biased viewpoints and continual pro-United States coverage (Red, White, and Blue TV, 1984).

Though highlighted for their initial large scale participation in the Olympics, no athlete from the People's Republic of China was mentioned by name, despite the presence of a rather large delegation of some 200 athletes. Among the athletes was according to McKay "the world record holder in the high jump." A waving Brooke Shields, Burt Lancaster, and ABC's own Linda Evans were noted for their presence in the stands, but at this meeting of world class athletes, this world record holder remained anonymous. Not a single athlete was interviewed during the Opening Ceremonies television coverage. On an occasion meant to praise their arrival and to welcome them, the guests of honor were held silent by the ABC coverage. Ironically, although shown a number of times on camera, even the then obscure Mary Lou Retton--the post Olympics media darling--was never acknowledged.

POLITICAL COMMENTARY

Relations to U.S.

The realm of politics was generally left to commentary by Peter Jennings, just as the sports domain was largely McKay's. References to a nation's relation to the United States were the third most frequent of all the content categories. This represented nearly 11 percent of total commentary, with 17 percent of the nations being mentioned in this regard. It should be noted that the following comments were exclusively from Jennings, ABC's onsite expert in foreign affairs.

Algeria is characterized as "much friendlier to the United States" after playing such an "important role" in the hostage crisis in Iran. Barbados is called an "active supporter of the United States" in the "invasion or rescue mission in Grenada." Barbados is said to have "supported the U.S. action." Oman is a "close friend" of the United States, the Sultan of Oman "providing strategic bases" in the Persian Gulf region. The one yardstick from which to measure friendship seemingly was these strategic bases. Somalia it seemed was "somewhat a friend of the United States" having recently had a falling out with the Soviet Union. The Dominican Republic has "long been associated with the United States and was occupied by the U.S. in 1916 and 1965." According to Jennings Egypt has been the "most popular Arab country in the United States" due largely to the Camp David Accords. Jamaica has

"very close ties to the United States" President Reagan uses the country as an "example to show private development in the Caribbean."

Not all statements are serious lessons in world affairs offered by Jennings. For example, Ghana is the country where "Shirley Temple was once ambassador." And Gambia, "Isn't that were Alex Haley's roots are?" The President of Sri Lanka was cited for giving President Reagan an elephant on the White House lawn. Visiting the White House was one of "the greatest occasions" of the King of Nepal's life. Little mention is made of nation potentially hostile to the United States except for a reference to U.S. and Syria's "troubled relations over Lebanon."

Economics

Mentions of economics or economic conditions related to nations numbered 11 percent of total references. There were 17 percent of the nations available for coding referred to in this context. The one comment Jennings had to make about Equatorial Guinea after some prodding by McKay was "It's terribly poor." Comments ranged from Indonesia's "unprecedented degree of prosperity" to Djibouti's "staggering unemployment rate of 80% ." A moment before Jennings termed this nation as still primarily nomadic, this might tend to render employment statistics inert. Botswana is a "rich nation, full of gold" just as Brazil is termed to be "full of coffee."

As if to substantiate Brazil's stereotypical link with coffee, Jennings related an "amusing tale" of how the Brazilian Olympic team in 1932 tried to finance their trip to Los Angeles by selling coffee along the way. The team fell a few cups short of its goal and never made an appearance in the 1932 Olympic Games.

Denmark "has the most prosperous small farmers in Europe." Argentina was "having great financial difficulty" and four countries are "oil empires" which either "exist because of oil" or "exist solely on oil" or "sit on oil." This interchange between McKay and Jennings did little to increase American viewers' understanding of the Middle East region:

KUWAIT

Jennings: "Another one of those nations of the Persian Gulf which sits on oil."

McKay: "Everything is free over there, is that right? ...Because of the oil?"

Jennings: "Well, they live quite well because of the government."

The only Arab nation mentioned in the context of athletics was the Saudi Arabian soccer team. Even this mention was linked with the gifts of cars, gold, and land lavished on the players.

The ABC Olympics short course on international economics provided very limited information and the world was divided into a perfect dichotomy of extreme poverty and wealth. Included in these descriptions was a consistent reliance on stereotyped images.

Internal Politics

Specific references to the internal politics of a nation comprised nine percent of total references coded. 14 percent of the nations receiving ABC coverage had some aspect of their country's political structure mentioned. For example, Jennings said they are "waiting in Chile, of course, for democracy, elections have once again been cancelled." Benin is "not a terribly happy place....essentially a one-party dictatorship." Morocco is ruled by one of the more "moderate leaders in the Arab world." Bahrain was called the "freest and most relaxed country in the Persian gulf." Paraguay is ruled by a military dictatorship "General Stroessner....since 1954." The incursions into the internal affairs of the member nations were usually brief and represented a single sentence or two offered by Jennings.

Strife or Warfare

Mentions of war or strife represented seven percent of the total references coded. Issues of disharmony included such mentions as the Falkland's War as the Argentineans marched into the stadium. Chad is "troubled by war with Libyan supported forces in the north and French supported forces in the south." Cyprus is "the flashpoint of the Eastern Mediterranean" and Lebanon is a "fractured society" due to war. Jennings even delves

into the history books to say that Denmark was once occupied by the Germans in World War II. At a time when the nations of the world unite to at least symbolically celebrate a spirit of friendship and cooperation, ABC reminded viewers the world is not at peace.

Fashion

On a much lighter side, references to the clothing the athletes wore as they entered the Coliseum represented eight percent of the total and actually outnumbered referrals to warfare or strife. Sometimes these fashion references replaced all other mentions about the given nation. For example, athletes and officials from Ghana are simply mentioned because of the "wonderful costumes" they wore. The audience was assured that the athletes of the Peoples Republic of Congo were "wearing traditional costume." The Australians looked "typical" as they paraded in with their bush hats. The Bermudians were "wearing, what else?.... Bermuda shorts."

The only comments offered about a fairly sizeable Swiss delegation centered around the imaginative use of the Olympic ring colors in their shirts and blouses. McKay pondered "I wonder why nobody thought of that until now?" Even the uniforms of the U.S. team were wedged into the commentary because some people thought the look "too casual" and unsuited for the Opening Ceremonies. Jennings revealed "I must confess...I like it." When there was

precious else to say, fashion entered into the commentary, especially in those countries without favored athletes or political unrests. The always colorfully attired Mongolians were surely missed on this score, having declined to attend the Games in joining the Soviet boycott.

Conclusion

The Parade of Nations is one of the more involving aspects of the Opening Ceremonies and offers one of the more interesting facets of Olympic coverage. Although sports related commentary did exceed political news type commentary in ABC's coverage of the 1984 Summer Olympic Opening Ceremonies, political references were still fairly prominent. The politics and sports mix encountered in this content analysis is perhaps not surprising given the often politically charged atmosphere of the Olympic Games in their present form. ABC's television images dealt largely in easily digestible international stereotypes often placed in the ethnocentric context of the United States, the most flagrant being continual geographic comparisons to the United States. For example, Bolivia being four times the size of Colorado or the Cayman Islands as one-tenth the size of Rhode Island.

The Olympic Games offer the television viewing public a rare glimpse of the peoples of other lands. However, this view is filtered through the mediated version of reality presented by the medium itself. Some have argued that this filtration process is

indicative of a tendency of the media in our society to foster hegemonic or standardized views of the world (Altheide, 1984). In considering the Opening Ceremonies of the Olympic Games, how and why are these presentations important? Television, as the most pervasive media force in America today, can provide a major source of knowledge. However, when the portrayals are distorted or limited to a few salient messages, perceptions of other nations are perhaps affected.

Certainly television coverage of the Opening Ceremonies cannot be expected provide the full depth and range of the international picture. As indicated earlier, the coverage of the Ceremonies approximates that of a large scale news event. However, while daily television news is a routinized process bounded by a variety of considerations, timeliness being paramount, this dimension of timeliness is not overly important to covering the Opening Ceremonies. For example, Peter Jennings could (and did) dip into the history books to remind viewers that Denmark was once occupied by Germany. Casting other commentary in the present day, Jennings, detailed a pre-Olympics squabble between the Bolivians and a Washington sports writer. Clearly the range of possible commentary is not limited by timeliness and in that respect seems to be fairly wide open.

Calling Bhutan "a closed kingdom" and Benin "not a terribly happy place" provides little more than heuristic catch phrases for viewers to grasp. The international structure of the Opening Ceremonies invites a wider range of content. Reducing a country

to being "rich in coffee" or having "prosperous farmers" ignores volumes of more interesting cultural or historical information that could benefit the audience. What such an approach does do is present a myopic view of the world and squander an infrequent opportunity.

Additional research possibilities may include the comparison ABC's presentation to that of other television sources, either international or domestic. For example, a casual viewing of NBC's coverage of the 1988 Summer Olympic Games Opening Ceremonies suggests some differences in approach (e.g. all nations being mentioned, less political references). These differences may ultimately be explained in terms of unique organizational approaches to these similar events.

In a real sense, McLuhan's global village gathers every four years to watch as representatives of all our individual villages unite in peaceful athletic competition. The Opening Ceremonies give us as television viewers a rare opportunity to cultivate a portion of the world and to at least view its people. For better or worse, commercial network television coverage provides the one means by which all Americans may focus attention on this gathering.

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Notes

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